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TRANSLATION (HM-611PCT):

Translation of WO 2004/004,938 A1 (PCT/EP2003/004,599)
with Amended Claims Incorporated Therein

METHOD AND CONTINUOUS CASTING AND ROLLING PLANT FOR SEMI-
ENDLESS OR ENDLESS ROLLING BY CASTING A METAL STRAND,
ESPECIALLY A STEEL STRAND, WHICH IS CUT TO LENGTH
AS REQUIRED AFTER SOLIDIFICATION

The invention concerns a method and a continuous casting and rolling plant for semi-endless or endless rolling by casting a metal strand, especially a steel strand, which is cut to length as required after solidification, wherein the cut lengths of cast strand are fed into a roller hearth furnace for heating and homogenizing at rolling temperature and are then fed at rolling temperature into a rolling mill to be rolled out, and wherein the continuous casting is continued without interruption during the rolling operation.

A process of this type is described in EP 0 264 459 B1. In this method, the cut lengths of cast strand are stored in the roller hearth furnace with cross transport. The cut lengths of cast strand are stored for a period of time that is several times, e.g., four times, their casting time. Furthermore, the process is practiced in such a way that the rolling of each

individual cut length of cast strand is carried out in a period of time that is only a fraction, e.g., one fifth, of its casting time and in such a way that the rolling is carried out discontinuously and the rolling operation is conducted with an interruption for a period of time that corresponds to the difference between a casting time and a rolling operation. This process operates strictly according to the continuous casting and is not coordinated with the rolling process.

The objective of the invention is to adjust the semi-endless rolling and endless rolling more closely to the conditions during rolling in order to match the rolling operation to the continuous casting operation with respect to time.

In accordance with the invention, this objective is achieved by reducing the casting rate for a roll change in such a way that a sufficient buffer time for a roll change is maintained between the end of the rolling of the preceding multiple length and the insertion of a new cut length or multiple length in the rolling mill. In this way, the semi-endless rolling and the endless rolling are adapted to the

conditions of the rolling, and a buffer time is created for the inevitable roll change.

In this connection, the greater lengths of rolling stock that result from semi-endless or endless rolling are taken into consideration by producing several coils from a multiple length.

The buffer time for the roll change can also be influenced by reducing the casting rate as a function of the feed rate of the rolling mill and/or the roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace and/or the final rolled thickness after the strand has been cut to length.

In accordance with another feature of the invention, it is proposed that the buffer length of the roller hearth furnace be adjusted at least to one roller plane.

Furthermore, to achieve the desired buffer time, it is advantageous for the casting rate V_c , which corresponds to the feed rate V_w of the rolling mill, to be reduced by an amount greater than or equal to the amount given by the following formula:

$$\Delta V = V_w - \frac{1}{\Delta t / L + 1 / V_w} (m / \min)$$

where

ΔV = the reduction of the casting rate

V_w = the feed rate of the rolling mill

Δt = the roll-changing time and

L = the length of the roller hearth furnace.

A further gain of time can be achieved by increasing the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate of the rolling mill between rolling campaigns within a casting sequence after the strand has been cut to length.

Another embodiment of the invention consists in optimizing the production capacity by using a combination of adjustment of the casting rate and adjustment of the final rolled thickness.

In this connection, it is also advantageous if the final rolled thickness is increased by a maximum factor of 2.5.

A different buffer time can be achieved by increasing the final rolled thickness by a maximum factor of 2 and reducing the casting rate to a minimum of 30%.

In accordance with a practical example, the method can be used in such a way that, after the strand has been cut to

length, the casting rate is reduced and/or the feed rate of the rolling mill and/or the final rolled thickness is increased, the worn rolls of the rolling mill are changed after completion of the rolling, and the casting rate is raised to the feed rate of the rolling mill after the roll change has been completed.

The continuous casting and rolling plant necessary for carrying out the method of the invention for semi-endless rolling or endless rolling of a cast metal or steel strand, which is cut to length as required in the solidified state, wherein the cut lengths of cast strand can be held at a high temperature and heated to rolling temperature and homogenized in a roller hearth furnace and can then be fed into a rolling mill, requires the successive arrangement of the continuous casting machine, a shearing station, a roller hearth furnace, other auxiliary pieces of equipment, a rolling mill, and a coiling installation at the end.

The continuous casting and rolling plant can then be operated by the method described above by providing a roller hearth furnace between the continuous casting machine and the rolling mill, which roller hearth furnace has at least one roller plane and a shearing station at its inlet or outlet, followed by a descaling system, which is followed by the rolling

mill, which in turn is followed by a cutting station, a cooling station, and a coiling installation.

In one embodiment, in which there are at least two roller planes, swiveling roller conveyors, each of which has a bending and/or straightening unit, are installed at the inlet and outlet of the roller hearth furnace. The continuously cast strand can thus be precisely guided into the given roller plane.

The strand guide can be designed in such a way that multiple lengths can be fed at a single height level from the outlet of the continuous casting machine by the roller conveyor of the roller hearth furnace into the rolling mill.

The method and equipment of the invention are explained in greater detail below with reference to the specific embodiments illustrated in the drawings.

-- Figure 1 shows the casting and rolling plant with a roller hearth furnace and a roller plane in a side view.

-- Figure 2A shows a partial side view with a cast strand, with the casting rate less than or equal to the rolling rate.

-- Figure 2B shows the same view with the conveyance rate of a cut length of cast strand raised to the rolling rate.

-- Figure 3A shows endless casting and rolling at equal casting and rolling rates and with two coiling installations.

-- Figure 3B shows endless casting and rolling with the two coiling installations.

-- Figure 4A shows the situation during a roll change and at reduced casting rate.

-- Figure 4B shows the situation after the roll change has been completed and the casting rate has been raised.

-- Figure 5 shows the casting and rolling plant in the same side view as Figure 1 for an alternative embodiment.

Figure 1 shows a side view of a casting and rolling plant, which comprises a continuous casting machine 1 in which a cast strand 1a is produced, a roller hearth furnace 2, and a rolling mill 3 with its associated auxiliary equipment.

In the continuous casting machine 1, a tundish 4 is fed from a casting ladle (not shown). The tundish is followed by a continuous casting mold 5, a containment roll stand 6 with a bending unit 7, and a straightening machine 8. A shearing station 10 is installed at the outlet 9 of the continuous casting machine 1. The shearing station 10 is followed (as an alternative in Figure 5) by a swiveling roller conveyor 11 for the inlet 12a of the roller hearth furnace 2. A swiveling roller conveyor 13 and a shearing station 14 are installed at the outlet 12b of the roller hearth furnace 2. The basic

embodiment shown in Figure 1 works without the swiveling roller conveyors 11, 13.

The shearing station 14 is followed by a descaling system 15, which is followed by the rolling mill 3 with about five to seven rolling stands. The rolling stands are followed by a cutting station 16, a cooling station 17, and two coilers 18.

The method is used for semi-endless rolling or endless rolling by casting molten metal, especially molten steel, into a cast strand 1a, which, after it has solidified, is cut to length in the shearing station 10, and then conveying the cut lengths 20 of cast strand into the roller hearth furnace 2. Each cut length 20 of cast strand is heated in the roller hearth furnace 2, homogenized in temperature, and brought to rolling temperature, so that it can be rolled out in the rolling mill 3. During this period of time, the continuous casting continues without interruption.

When it becomes necessary to carry out a roll change due to wear of the rolls 3a, the casting rate V_c is reduced to allow sufficient buffer time for the roll change between the end of the rolling of the preceding multiple length 21 and the insertion of a new cut length 20 or multiple length 21 in the rolling mill 3. Several coils 22 can be wound from the multiple

length 21.

The casting rate V_c is reduced, for example, as a function of the feed rate V_w of the rolling mill 3 and/or of the given roll-changing time, including the roll pass designing, and/or the buffer length 23 of the roller hearth furnace 2 and/or the final rolled thickness after shearing. The buffer length 23 of the roller hearth furnace 2 can be adjusted at least to one roller plane 24.

In Figure 2A, the casting rate V_c is set less than or equal to the feed rate V_w into the rolling mill 3. As soon as the roller hearth furnace 2 has been charged, the casting rate V_c can be raised back to the feed rate V_w , as shown in Figure 2B.

Endless rolling is shown in Figure 3A. The cast strand 1a is conveyed at the casting rate V_c , which is equal to the feed rate V_w into the first rolling stand, and then rolled, cooled, coiled, and cut in the cutting station 16. As is shown in Figure 3B, after the cast strand 1a has been cut to length in the shearing station 10, it can be cast at a reduced casting rate V_c , and the cut length of cast strand 20 is rolled and coiled at the feed rate V_w .

The casting rate V_c is reduced by an amount greater than or equal to the amount given by the following formula:

$$\Delta V = V_w - \frac{1}{\Delta t / L + 1 / V_w} (m/min)$$

where

ΔV = the reduction in the casting rate (m/min)

V_w = the feed rate of the rolling mill (m/min)

Δt = the roll-changing time (min)

L = the length of the roller hearth furnace (m).

At a feed rate $V_w = 10$ m/min, a roll-changing time $\Delta t = 10$ min, and a roller hearth furnace length $L = 200$ m, the casting rate V_c must be reduced by at least 3.33 m/min.

Reduction of the Casting Rate:

$$\Delta V = 10 - \frac{1}{10/200 + 1/10} = 10 - \frac{1}{3/20} = 10m - 6.667m = 3.33m/min$$

The roll change is shown in Figure 4A. According to the above calculation, the casting rate V_c is 6.67 m/min and is thus lower than the feed rate V_w . After the roll change (Figure 4B), the casting rate V_c is raised to the feed rate V_w again.

Between the rolling campaigns within a casting sequence, the final rolled thickness and/or the feed rate V_w can be increased after the strand has been cut to length.

However, it is also possible to use a combination of adjustment of the casting rate V_c and adjustment of the final

rolled thickness to optimize the production capacity. In this connection, the final rolled thickness can be increased by a maximum factor of 2.5. Another option is to increase the final rolled thickness by a maximum factor of 2 and to reduce the casting rate to a minimum of 30%.

In another embodiment, after the strand has been cut to length, the casting rate V_c is reduced, and/or the feed rate V_w of the rolling mill 3 and/or the final rolled thickness is increased; upon completion of rolling, the worn rolls 3a of the rolling mill 3 are changed; and after the roll change has been completed, the casting rate V_c is increased to the feed rate V_w of the rolling mill 3.

The continuous casting and rolling plant for semi-endless rolling or endless rolling of a cast metal or steel strand, which is cut to length as required in the solidified state to produce cut lengths 20 of the cast strand 1a, wherein the cut lengths 20 of cast strand 1a are held at a high temperature and heated to rolling temperature and homogenized in a roller hearth furnace 2 and are then fed into a rolling mill 3, requires that the continuous casting machine 1 cast the strand continuously. To this end, the roller hearth furnace 2 with at least one roller plane 24 is installed between the continuous casting

machine 1 and the rolling mill 3 and at its inlet 12a and/or outlet 12b has a shearing station 14, followed by a descaling system 15, which is followed by the first rolling stand, and the rolling mill 3 is following by the cutting station 16, cooling station 17, and coilers 18.

The roller conveyors 11, 13 on the run-in side and the runout side have bending and/or straightening units 7, 8, which can be set or adjusted to the given roller plane 24. The swiveling roller conveyors 11, 13 at the inlet 12a and at the outlet 12b of the roller hearth furnace 2 with at least two roller planes 24 are thus each provided with a bending and/or straightening unit 7, 8 (cf. Figure 5).

In accordance with the alternative design in Figure 5, multiple lengths 21 on several roller planes 24 can be passed by the swiveling roller conveyor 11 of the roller hearth furnace 2 and the swiveling roller conveyor 13 from the outlet 9 of the continuous casting machine 1 to the rolling mill 3.

List of Reference Numbers

- 1 continuous casting machine
- 1a cast strand
- 2 roller hearth furnace
- 3 rolling mill
- 3a roll
- 4 tundish
- 5 continuous casting mold
- 6 containment roll stand
- 7 bending unit
- 8 straightening machine
- 9 outlet [of the continuous casting machine 1]
- 10 shearing station
- 11 roller conveyor
- 12a inlet [of the roller hearth furnace 2]
- 12b outlet [of the roller hearth furnace 2]
- 13 roller conveyor
- 14 shearing station
- 15 descaling system
- 16 cutting station
- 17 cooling station

18 coiler
19
20 cut length of cast strand
21 multiple length
22 coil
23 buffer length
24 roller plane